



BRIEFING STATEMENT

BLM-MONTANA/DAKOTAS

BILLINGS FIELD OFFICE • 5001 SOUTHGATE DRIVE • BILLINGS, MONTANA 59101 • WWW.BLM.GOV/MT

March 19, 2012

SUBJECT: WILD HORSE AND BURRO PROGRAM

I. SUMMARY:

The primary goals of the Montana/Dakotas' Wild Horse and Burro Program are to manage wild horses in the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (PMWHR) and conduct adoptions of excess wild horses from the PMWHR. Compliance inspections of adopted wild horses from other Western states also occur throughout the Montana/Dakotas organization.

II. BACKGROUND:

Montana's only free-roaming wild horses are managed within the PMWHR, about 60 miles south of Billings. Most recent genetic analysis indicates these horses are closely related to light racing and riding breeds with strong indication of colonial Spanish ancestry. The range is managed in partnership with the Forest Service, National Park Service, and BLM. Although portions of the PMWHR were established through a Secretarial order in 1968 and 1969, the area is managed under the Wild Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 as amended.

The Pryor Mountain Herd Management Area Plan (HMAP) guides management of the range. The Billings Field Office issued it on May 22, 2009, and the Interior Board of Land Appeals affirmed it in January 2010. The HMAP takes a balanced approach to wild horse management while recognizing each agency's authority in wild horse management. The HMAP is designed to preserve Spanish characteristics, maintain genetic diversity, and balance the wild horse population with the resources. The plan calls for numerous water projects, weed control, riparian protections and other improvements in order to protect resources and work towards increasing the appropriate management level (AML) in a legal and responsible manner. Most range improvement projects identified in the plan have been implemented. Other aspects of the HMAP include a comprehensive fertility control program through 2015 designed to stabilize the population. A non-helicopter gather is planned for 2012.

The BLM strives to manage the PMWHR primarily for the benefit of wild horses while maintaining a thriving natural ecological balance, preserving multiple use relationships, and complying with other agencies' mandates.

Adoption demand for wild horses is lower than ever before, yet Pryor wild horses are highly sought after and all have been adopted or placed when available.

PUBLIC INTEREST:

Wild horse issues attract national and international attention. Local and national interest groups often are very passionate and highly involved with issues surrounding the Pryor Mountain wild horses. Some groups are interested in minimizing any human management while others are primarily concerned with the humane treatment of the horses, the economics of the horse program, or the environmental impacts wild horses have on the range. Success of the wild horse and burro program is highly dependent upon partnerships and volunteer efforts with members of the public, interest groups, and other federal and state agencies.

CONTACT:

Jared Bybee, Rangeland Management Specialist (State Wild Horse and Burro Specialist), (406) 896-5223.